

Kid's Talk

10 Tips for Communicating with Children

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An Open Mind Is an Open Door

All kids make mistakes. Avoid being overly critical when talking about them, and try to make it a learning experience.

No Talk Is Too Small

Reacting enthusiastically whenever kids initiate the conversation will encourage them to do so again in the future.

Talk While You Tuck

Bedtime offers a very relaxed atmosphere that is a perfect opportunity to ask kids about their day.

Positive Before Negative

Build up kids' self-esteem by pointing out positive traits before explaining what they've done wrong.

Words Fly When You're Having Fun

Kids tend to drop their defenses during fun activities like shopping, sports, scouts, amusement park visits, eating out, etc.

Go One-on-One

Kids are more likely to open up when they have you all to themselves. Give each one some individual time.

Practice Makes Perfect

Parents and kids alike need practice communicating with each other. The more often you do it, the easier it gets.

Get Yourselves Together

Hold frequent family meetings to discuss both the good and the bad, and plan on a certain number of family dinners each week.

Give a Listen

Offer kids your full attention, and really hear them out. Putting yourself in their shoes helps to understand their point of view.

Make Drive Time Quality Time

Use the time spent traveling to school, practices, events, etc., to have a chat, rather than wasting that valuable time in silence.

A Few Don'ts Don't...

- Use sarcasm or make fun of kids during conversation
- Let communication take a backseat to the Internet or TV
- Dominate the conversation with a lecture
- Allow marital conflicts to hinder communication
- Be afraid to apologize when you're wrong

Conversation Starters

Sometimes, it's just as simple as asking your kids a question. An open-ended question that empowers them to share their views on something - anything at all. Here are some examples used by the Erie County Council on Children and Families in their current billboard campaign:

- Who's the luckiest person in the world?
- Which teacher will you never forget?
- How would you change your school?
- Who would you love to spend a day with?
- Who has life easier - boys or girls?
- What's more valuable than money?
- What would be a dream come true?
- What do you like most about your friends?
- How old do you wish you were?
- Who is the nicest person you know?

Dr. Kenneth Condrell has been a child psychologist and family counselor for over 30 years. Among his numerous published works are the books "How Not to Raise a Brat," "The Best Divorced Dad You Can Be," and "Wimpy Parents: From Toddlers to Teen - How Not to Raise a Brat." Dr. Condrell appears on numerous television and radio programs, including Channel 4's Five O'Clock News.

The Erie County Council on Children and Families was established to coordinate county-wide services that support children and families. It has become the focal point for local government, public and volunteer organizations that are engaged in delivering social, educational, health, mental health, and other supportive and rehabilitative services to children and families.